

REMARKS

Claims 1-6, 8-17, 19-23 and 25-29 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, claims 7 and 18 are canceled without prejudice to or disclaimer of the subject matter recited therein and claims 1, 8-10, 12, 19-21, 23 and 25 are amended. No new matter is added.

Applicant thanks the Examiner for the indication that claims 7-11 and 18-22 contain allowable subject matter.

Entry of the amendments is proper under 37 CFR §1.116 because the amendments: (a) place the application in condition for allowance for the reasons discussed herein; (b) do not raise any new issue requiring further search and/or consideration as the amendments merely amplify issues previously discussed throughout prosecution by incorporation of the allowable subject matter of dependent claims 7 and 18 into independent claims 1 and 12 and similar computer readable storage medium claim 23 and means-plus-function claim 25; (c) satisfy a requirement of form asserted in the previous Office Action; and (d) place the application in better form for appeal, should an appeal be necessary. The amendments are necessary and were not earlier presented because they are made in response to arguments raised in the final rejection. Entry of the amendments is thus respectfully requested.

In the Office Action, claims 1-23 and 25-29 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b), or in the alternative, under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over newly applied U.S. Patent No. 6,344,836 to Suzuki. Additionally, claims 4-6 and 15-17 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over Suzuki in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,923,307 to Hogle. These rejections are respectfully traversed.

The rejection of independent claims 1 and 23 is rendered moot by incorporation of the allowable subject matter of dependent claim 7 into independent claim 1 and corresponding computer readable storage medium claim 23. Similarly, the rejection of independent claims

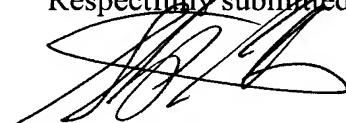
12 and 25 is rendered moot by incorporation of the allowable subject matter of dependent claim 18 into independent claim 12 and corresponding means-plus-function claim 25. Accordingly, independent claims 1, 12, 23 and 25 and claims dependent therefrom distinguish over the cited art.

Withdrawal of the rejections is respectfully requested.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of the pending claims are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



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Date: March 31, 2009

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